# Breaking Barriers

## Enhancing employment opportunities

**Final Report**
April 2002

ALBERTA

**MINISTER'S EMPLOYABILITY COUNCIL**

*The Honourable Clint Dunford, MLA*
*Minister of Alberta Human Resources and Employment*

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April 10, 2002

To: Honourable Clint Dunford, Minister

On behalf of the Minister's Employability Council, I am very pleased to present you with *Breaking Barriers: Enhancing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.*

In conducting its work, the Council established two main goals:

- To build awareness about the contributions that persons with disabilities can make to the Alberta economy and to promote best practices in the workplace that lead to the removal of systemic and attitudinal barriers to employment.
- To make policy and delivery of employment-related programming more responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities so they can find and keep work.

We commend you for your actions on the recommendations in the Council's first report, *Employment Supports*, issued in January 2001. The Council now requests that you consider each recommendation in *Breaking Barriers* and develop a response.

We hope that the recommendations and other discussions in this report will result in changes that will enable persons with disabilities to find and keep meaningful employment in an enlightened, user-friendly workplace.

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I would personally like to thank the members of the Council for their commitment and hard work since 1999. I believe that the wide knowledge and expertise they brought to our discussions will be instrumental in helping to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Their contributions are significant and very much appreciated. I would also like to thank the organizations that employ these individuals for supporting them in this task and allowing them to take the time to do this demanding work.

*Breaking Barriers* wraps up the Council's work. We have now provided recommendations on all three identified priority areas for action: employment supports, service delivery and awareness education.

The Council recognizes that although its formal mandate is now concluded, a great deal of work remains to be done in reaching the goals outlined above. Council members remain committed to this task. We know that this work must continue.

It has been an honour to serve on this committee.

Sincerely,

Richard Marz

Richard Marz
Chair

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# Executive Summary

The Council views this as a most opportune time to break down barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities.

Alberta's economy remains the fastest growing in Canada. A document on labour force planning in Alberta, *Prepared for Growth - Building Alberta's Labour Supply*, released by the Minister of Human Resources and Employment in November 2001, forecasts that the province's labour force will grow between 2.0% and 2.2% a year from 1999 to 2005. This represents an addition of between 198,000 and 242,000 people to the labour supply. Employers across the province are reporting difficulties in recruiting the skilled labour they need. Persons with disabilities are available to help fill this labour shortage[1].

These trends show that actions to break down barriers to employment of persons with disabilities are in the best economic interests of both employers and governments. Greater employment of persons with disabilities will:

- Lead to economic self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities who were previously unemployed or under-employed.
- Address some of the current skill shortages in the labour pool.
- Give employers the skilled employees they need to compete successfully.
- Contribute to Alberta's economic growth.

Persons with disabilities report that one of the major obstacles to employment they face is not the disability itself but systemic and attitudinal barriers. The result is that individuals with disabilities are not viewed the same way as other potential workers and can not access the same opportunities.

[1] The Health and Activity Limitations Survey, Statistics Canada (HALS, 1991), states that there are 244,000 working age Albertans (15-64 years) with disabilities. Of these, 58% were employed, compared to more than 78% of the same age group of Albertans without disabilities.

The Minister's Employability Council has recommended actions to address these concerns. The actions are grouped under two main goals:

1. **Increasing Awareness**

   To build awareness about the contributions that persons with disabilities can make to the Alberta economy and to promote best practices in the workplace that lead to the removal of systemic and attitudinal barriers to employment.

2. **Improving Service Delivery**

   To make policy and delivery of employment-related programming more responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities so they can find and keep work.

## Addressing Goal 1—Increasing Awareness

Goal 1 reflects the fact that employers may be uncertain about the abilities of persons with disabilities and the employment costs their organizations might face in accommodating persons with disabilities.

Employer perception of a lack of support services and accommodation is a critical factor in the unemployment faced by persons with disabilities. This may lead employers to consistently overlook persons with disabilities in their recruiting practices.

The Council recommends a number of strategies to build awareness:

- Celebrate success
- Recognize leadership
- Develop sensitivity training
- Show the advantages
- Outline available supports
- Increase access to information
- Provide insurance and health information

## Addressing Goal 2—Service Delivery

Goal 2 addresses the Council's concern that policy and programming need to be more responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities expecting to enter and remain in the workforce. The Council recommends a number of strategies to help achieve this goal.

- Provide workplace supports
- Provide assistive technology
- Provide work experience
- Provide employment supports in a timely way
- Increase staff knowledge and expertise
- Provide life skills and work skills programs
- Increase confidence and abilities
- Facilitate collaboration

## Other Areas for Action

The Council suggests that Alberta Human Resources and Employment work with other ministries and orders of government to improve coordination among government departments in a combined effort to break down employment barriers for persons with disabilities.

## Next Steps

The Council's formal mandate is now completed. The Council hopes that the advice that it has provided will lead to change that will enable persons with disabilities to find and keep meaningful employment in an enlightened, user-friendly workplace.

The Council recognizes that a great deal of work remains to be done to achieve the defined goals. Achievement of the goals will take an ongoing effort by all the partners to this task: persons with disabilities, families, employers, governments, service providers, disability organizations, service clubs and educational institutions, among others.

It is a task that must be pursued diligently and consistently so that persons with disabilities can participate in society to the best of their abilities.

# Section 1—Background

Albertans with disabilities want to share in the Alberta Advantage. They seek to participate in society to the best of their abilities. Persons with disabilities need full access to competitive employment with fair and equitable compensation comparable to the rest of the population.

In return, persons with disabilities offer employers a vast range of skills, knowledge and expertise. They are increasingly taking advantage of new technologies and greater access to post-secondary education to expand their skills and expertise, as well as increasing their range of work opportunities. As a result, the employment rate for persons with disabilities should be comparable to Alberta's working population.

The reality, however, is that employers and Albertans with disabilities are not connecting as often as they could be. Persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and under-employed than most other Albertans. The Health and Activity Limitations Survey (HALS, 1991) states that there are 244,000 working age Albertans (15-64 years) with disabilities. Of these, 58% were employed, compared to more than 78% of the same age group of Albertans without disabilities.

The Minister's Employability Council, representing persons with disabilities, employers and service providers, has been working to help address this situation. Its role is to provide advice to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, the Honourable Clint Dunford, on:

- Identifying barriers to employment faced by persons with disabilities.
- Recommending goals and developing strategies to overcome these obstacles.

## Section 1—Background

### Mandate

The mandate of the Minister's Employability Council is to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by raising awareness amongst employers and providing advice to government.

### Vision

Persons with disabilities have meaningful employment in an enlightened, user-friendly workplace.

### Mission

The Minister's Employability Council anticipates and responds to its stakeholders through solution-based recommendations that enhance quality employment relationships with persons with disabilities, Alberta employers, government and Albertans.

The removal of barriers to employment for persons with disabilities offers multiple benefits to society. Through employment, persons with disabilities will be better able to support themselves and gain greater skills and self-confidence. Dependence on income support programs will be reduced. Employers who recruit persons with disabilities will gain access to a wider pool of skilled labour, helping to assure the continued growth of Alberta's economy and benefiting all Albertans.

Governments alone cannot break the barriers. The success of the goals and strategies outlined in this document depend on the ongoing commitment of persons with disabilities, families, employers, governments, service providers, disability organizations, service clubs, educational institutions and teachers.

Each partner has a contribution to make in helping to achieve the vision of a future where persons with disabilities have meaningful employment in an enlightened, user-friendly workplace. This vision can be achieved through action that reflects our individual and collective responsibility to break down barriers hindering the full development and independence of the individual. That means:

- Persons with disabilities will be ready, willing and able to prepare for, find and keep work.
- Employers will be willing to consider qualified candidates and to provide reasonable accommodations to allow them to work effectively.
- Governments will provide skills training and development as well as the supports required by persons with disabilities to prepare for, enter and remain in the workforce.
- This is a challenge that must be taken up in partnership by all sectors of society.

# Forces and Sources of Change

The Council recognizes that employment of persons with disabilities will continue to be influenced by a number of factors outside its mandate.

## External Forces

- **Alberta's economy:** *Prepared for Growth - Building Alberta's Labour Supply* predicts that Alberta's labour force will grow by between 2.0 and 2.2% from 1999 to 2005. This represents an addition of between 198,000 and 242,000 people to the labour supply. This growth is creating a skills shortage in Alberta's economy. The shortage presents both an opportunity and a challenge for persons with disabilities to enter the workforce. Although this growth is forecast to continue, the Alberta economy is influenced by external forces such as economic conditions experienced by its trading partners, including the United States, and by world energy prices and demand. A downturn in the economy would affect the number of job openings and could influence government spending on programs and activities.

## Technology and education

- **Increased options:** New technologies and increased access to post-secondary education are enabling more persons with disabilities to do work that was never before possible.

## Society

- **Increased expectations:** There is increasing expectation that persons with disabilities will be contributing members of the workforce. This trend may affect acceptance of persons with disabilities in the workplace and influence the actions of employers, agencies and governments.

## Assumptions

In developing this report, the Council made a number of fundamental assumptions about persons with disabilities and employment. The assumptions are backed by studies in both the public and private sectors and by the experiences and observations of Council members.

- Investing in actions to remove barriers to employment offers benefits for persons with disabilities, employers, governments, the economy and society as a whole.
- Providing education, training and life-long learning opportunities results in increased employability.
- As employment earnings rise, personal economic security and independence increases.
- Governments, employers, persons with disabilities and other stakeholders must work together to achieve success in removing barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are responsible for their work-related decisions.
- Persons with disabilities deserve access to competitive employment with compensation comparable to the rest of the population.
- Persons with disabilities will benefit most if programming and supports are individualized, flexible, affordable and stable.

# Section 2—Goals and Strategies

## Goal 1—Increasing Awareness

Stakeholders, including employers, persons with disabilities and service providers, will be aware of (1) the potential pool of skilled labour available among persons with disabilities and of (2) the supports and services available from Alberta Human Resources and Employment to assist in the employment of persons with disabilities.

A key factor in the unemployment and under-employment faced by many persons with disabilities is the employer perception that support services and accommodations such as personal assistance, adaptive equipment and workplace modifications are unavailable or very expensive. This perception may be combined with employer uncertainty about the abilities of persons with disabilities. As a result, some employers may consistently overlook the pool of skilled persons with disabilities in their recruiting practices.

Recommendations under Goal 1 build awareness of the employment value of persons with disabilities and of the supports and other resources available. Persons with disabilities, employers and governments have a shared role in building this awareness.

### Key Recommendations to Achieve Goal 1

#### Strategy 1.1—Celebrate success

Show the advantages of hiring and retaining persons with disabilities by celebrating their achievements in the workplace. This may be done through a speaker's bureau, website or newsletters where employers talk about successes in employment of persons with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** More employers are aware of the abilities of persons with disabilities. The self-confidence of persons with disabilities increases.

### Strategy 1.2—Recognize leadership

Explore the creation of awards of recognition for employers who show leadership in removing systemic and attitudinal barriers to hiring, training and retaining employees with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** Awards of recognition are established. More employers hire, maintain and develop employees with disabilities.

### Strategy 1.3—Develop sensitivity training

Develop and offer sensitivity training to employers, prospective employees and other interested parties concerning the abilities and needs of persons with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** Employers have increased knowledge and awareness about the abilities of persons with disabilities. More companies hire persons with disabilities.

### Strategy 1.4—Show the advantages

Develop a communications campaign to highlight the advantages of hiring persons with disabilities. This campaign would include a focus on how persons with disabilities can help to reduce current skill shortages and contribute to a company's bottom line.

- **Outcomes:** More companies hire persons with disabilities.

### Strategy 1.5—Outline available supports

Take action to provide persons with disabilities, individual employers and associations with an overview of employment supports available and effective hiring practices.

- **Outcomes:** Employers have more information about effective hiring practices and employment supports and as a result hire more persons with disabilities.

**Strategy 1.6—Increase access to information**

Develop multi-channel access points—Internet, in person, telephone, written—to provide information to employers and persons with disabilities about employment supports and services available.

- **Outcomes:** Persons with disabilities and employers have better information about the supports available.

**Strategy 1.7—Provide insurance and health information**

Encourage insurance and health benefit carriers to conduct reviews to determine whether their coverage policies create barriers preventing persons with disabilities from getting and keeping work. At the same time, educate employers about the facts and best practices surrounding insurance and health benefit packages so employers are aware that hiring persons with disabilities can be a good economic decision.

- **Outcomes:** Insurance and health benefit packages are not a barrier to employment of persons with disabilities. Employers have more information about insurance and health benefit packages and, as a result, hire more persons with disabilities.

# Goal 2—Improving Service Delivery

Policy and programming will be more responsive to persons with disabilities expecting to enter and remain in the workforce.

Employment-related programs and activities must be thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Programming should include:

- Life skills to build confidence and extend abilities.
- Improved workplace supports and assistive technology.

Agencies and governments need to collaborate to develop effective practices that result in work for persons with disabilities. This is related to timely delivery of employment supports, work experience opportunities and links with the education sector.

## Key Recommendations to Achieve Goal 2

### Strategy 2.1—Provide workplace supports

Make improved workplace supports available to persons with disabilities. These will include training-on-the job models, job coaches, job developers, training internship programs, work experience/exposure and job shadowing. The length of time that support can be provided will be appropriate for individual needs.

- **Outcomes:** Persons with disabilities make use of workplace supports available. Increased employment of persons with disabilities and increased quality of employment for those who are already working.

### Strategy 2.2—Provide assistive technology

Provide assistive technology to persons with disabilities when they need it to find and keep work.

- **Outcomes:** Persons with disabilities and employers make use of the assistive technology available. Increased employment of persons with disabilities and increased quality of employment for those who are already working.

### Strategy 2.3—Provide work experience

Provide work experience opportunities to young persons with disabilities to:

a) Show them the work and learning opportunities available.

b) Foster confidence in their skills and help them become ready for the labour market.

c) Begin to break the cycle of dependency.

d) Educate employers and their employees about hiring and working with persons with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** Increased number of youth with disabilities seeking and achieving employment.

### Strategy 2.4—Provide employment supports in a timely way

Improve the timeliness for providing employment supports to persons with disabilities, including prospective employees, to expedite or improve the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** Increased employer and employee satisfaction.

### Strategy 2.5—Increase staff knowledge and expertise

Increase the knowledge and expertise of service delivery staff who provide services to persons with disabilities, with a special focus on rural areas.

- **Outcomes:** Persons with disabilities report increased satisfaction with service delivery.

### Strategy 2.6—Provide life skills and work skills programs

Include life skills, counselling, work skills, work search and job maintenance among the programs available for persons with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** The number of persons with disabilities actively seeking work increases.

### Strategy 2.7—Increase confidence and abilities

Ensure that service delivery agencies, clients and Alberta Human Resources and Employment work together to build the confidence of persons with disabilities and their ability to take control of their work life. This will encourage persons with disabilities to take responsibility for their work-related decisions.

- **Outcomes:** The number of persons with disabilities expecting to work increases.

### Strategy 2.8—Facilitate collaboration

Facilitate collaboration between service clubs, employers, Alberta Human Resources and Employment and service providers to develop practices that result in work for persons with disabilities.

- **Outcomes:** The number of partnerships increases. Increased employment of persons with disabilities by partnering employers.

# Section 3—Other Areas for Action

The Council identified eight areas for action outside the mandate of Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Action in these areas is critical to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Council urges the Minister of Human Resources and Employment and his colleagues in other departments and other orders of government to continue to remove barriers to employment faced by persons with disabilities.

## Provide access to transportation

Work with the federal, provincial and municipal governments to make accessible transportation a reality across Alberta for persons with disabilities. Transportation to and from the workplace is vital to enable persons with disabilities to work. Lack of adequate transportation, especially in smaller urban and rural areas, is a significant barrier. The Council hopes that efforts to eliminate this barrier will become a government priority.

## Provide access to buildings

Review, reform and enforce building codes to ensure that buildings are accessible and safe for all persons with disabilities. The Council identified concerns that building codes are not uniformly enforced and that exemptions are easy to obtain.

## Provide access to housing

Build partnerships with the federal, provincial and municipal governments to make accessible housing a reality for persons with disabilities. Seeking and finding employment depend on having a place to live. The lack of affordable and accessible housing makes this an area of critical concern. The Council hopes that this area will be considered a priority for all government departments and private sector partners involved in housing issues.

## Ensure early intervention

Develop coordinated efforts between Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Health and Wellness and other departments to ensure that early return to work interventions are readily available. This is necessary because early intervention is critical to facilitate a successful return to work, both for people injured on the job and for non-work-related injuries. Career counselling must be provided in the early stages of recovery.

## Improve insurance services

Review programs and services offered by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) in Alberta. The Council identified concerns about whether WCB programs and services are flexible enough to allow persons with disabilities to begin to make improvements in their financial and work situations. The Council supports reviews to improve and enhance vocational planning and return to work interventions that take into account all of an individual's barriers to finding and keeping work.

## Address concerns about Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD)

Continue to work with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to address concerns over CPPD. A pilot project is underway between HRDC and Alberta Human Resources and Employment to allow CPPD and AISH clients to participate in the part-time Alberta Community Employment (ACE) program. The ACE program offers clients an opportunity to work part time without losing their CPPD benefits for the duration of the program (6-12 months). The Council encourages continued work in this area. Another concern was raised regarding the loss of medical benefits when mutual clients of AISH and CPPD ceased to be eligible for the AISH program because of the indexed cost of living increases for CPPD.

## Support school integration

Continue to work with Alberta Learning to give children with disabilities greater opportunities to be integrated into mainstream schools with appropriate support in the classroom. This will enable them to be educated in a manner that will help them gain greater employment opportunities after graduation. The Council sees integration into mainstream schools as a primary step before integration into the workplace.

## Support education links

Continue to support the efforts being made by Alberta Learning to increase awareness of the skills and abilities of students with disabilities. This can be accomplished by teaching students and future educators about persons with disabilities both through the curriculum and though integration of students with disabilities into the classroom. The Council recognizes the important role that the education system can play in breaking down barriers to future employment and in supporting students with disabilities.

# Next Steps

The Minister's Employability Council commends the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, the Honourable Clint Dunford, for his vision and commitment to enhancing employment opportunities for Albertans with disabilities. The Council thanks the Minister for the actions completed or underway on employment supports.

The Council asks the Minister to consider each goal and strategy in *Breaking Barriers* and develop a response.

The Council's formal mandate is now completed. The Council hopes that the advice that it has provided to governments and other stakeholders will lead to change that will enable persons with disabilities to have meaningful employment in an enlightened, user-friendly workplace. Council members are committed to this vision.

The Council recognizes that a great deal of work remains to be done to achieve these goals. Achievement of the goals will take an ongoing effort by all the partners to this task: persons with disabilities, families, employers, governments, service providers, disability organizations, service clubs and educational institutions. It is a task that must be pursued diligently and consistently so that persons with disabilities can participate in society to the best of their abilities.

# Appendix A—Biographies of Council Members

**Colin Cantlie** is a vocational rehabilitation specialist. He has over 25 years of experience in human resources with management responsibility for strategic planning and operations relating to personnel management. He researches, designs and implements workshops and other projects relating to persons with disabilities. He also advises senior management on barrier free designs within their organizations.

**Oliver Cardinal**, a member of Bigstone Cree Nation, has used a wheelchair since an industrial accident in 1977. He subsequently worked with the Canadian Paraplegic Association as a rehabilitation counsellor for First Nations people with disabilities. He is one of the founding members of the Aboriginal Disability Society of Alberta and continues to serve as president. He has also been involved with the Alberta Disabilities Forum, the Advisory Board on Services for the Handicapped with the City of Edmonton and with community agencies promoting needs and services for First Nations people.

**Brad Ellingson** is employed at MEDICHAIR Lethbridge and is a former member of the Workers' Compensation Board. Before a 1978 accident that left him a paraplegic, he was employed in the plumbing, painting and oilfield industries. Since then, he has been involved with a number of provincial and community agencies, including Disabled on the Move, the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities and Lethbridge Handi-Bus Association.

**Jennifer Fisk** of Edmonton is the Executive Assistant, Office of the Vice-President, External Relations, at the University of Alberta. She is the former Regional Director for the Prairies and Northwest Territories of the Canadian Bankers Association (CBA).

## Appendix A: Biographies of Council Members

**Jason Foster** is the Director of Policy Analysis for the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL). The AFL represents over 115,000 Alberta workers. As a committed and active lobbyist for workers' rights, the AFL promotes progressive disability management and endorses strong duty-to-accommodate measures.

**Keith Gylander** is the Executive Director of the Information, Communications and Electronics Technologies Alliance, a high-tech industry association. Some members of the Alliance have developed or are working on technologies and products to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

**Ann Hickmann** is the Chief Operating Officer of Alberta's Training for Excellence Corporation (ATEC). ATEC, previously a provincial government agency, is now a not-for-profit training and consulting company and the national certifying body for tourism occupations in Alberta. She was instrumental in developing and implementing the SERVICE BEST training program (previously known as ALBERTA BEST) which has seen over 85,000 trained and has won numerous awards. In addition to providing soft-skills training for a variety of sectors, ATEC continues to promote tourism as a career and has been involved in a youth training and employment initiative for tourism.

**Margaret MacCabe** of Edmonton is the Chair of the Employment Committee of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and sits on the Personal Supports Committee. She is currently a community rehabilitation counsellor with the Canadian Paraplegic Association in Edmonton.

## Appendix A: Biographies of Council Members

**Glen Lavold** of Ardrossan is one of the owner-operators of Glen Lavold Travel agency for people with disabilities. He has been a founding director of the Sheltered Workshop, a former chairman of the Western Canada Lottery and a former president of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. He is a past president of Northlands Park (the Edmonton Exhibition Association). He is also an active volunteer in the disabled community, most recently with the Multiple Sclerosis Society. He has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

**Beverley Matthiessen** is the Executive Director of the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities. She has been in management of non-profit organizations for over 15 years and is a small business owner. Beverley also has experience in the banking, hotel and social work fields.

**Richard Marz** is Member of the Legislative Assembly for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and Chair of the Minister's Employability Council. He is also Chair of the Farm Assessment and Taxation Committee. He has an active interest in community affairs and is involved with the Disabled Transportation Society. He was a founding member of the Provincial Health Council and Chair of the Central Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties.

**Shirley McBride** is a career consultant with a career planning business employing more than 50 Albertans in Edmonton, Calgary and Medicine Hat. She has been a career practitioner since 1980 and was an occupational therapist before that.

**Lawrence Noel** of Bonnyville is an Albertan with a disability. He hopes to make a positive impact for persons with developmental disabilities.

## Appendix A: Biographies of Council Members

**Michael O'Connor** is one of the founders of TurCon United Building Systems Inc., a construction management and general contracting firm. He was an apprentice carpenter in Alberta and earned a journeyman carpenter certificate and Interprovincial Red Seal. He is past president of the Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce and of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce.

**Lindy Rollingson** is President/Chief Executive Officer of the Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Association. She has extensive experience with family housing issues, property management and non-profit groups. She has also worked with provincial and municipal government departments, Crown corporations and others on association matters.

**Patricia Turnbull** of Ponoka has been employed in the human service field for 19 years and has extensive experience developing services for people with a mental illness and people with developmental disabilities. She is Executive Director for the Canadian Mental Health Association, Central Alberta Region.

**Nizar Walji** is a member of the Older Adult Injury Prevention Working Group with the Calgary Regional Health Authority. He has run physiotherapy clinics and a hospital physiotherapy department and has coached competitive boxing at the international level.

# Appendix B—Glossary of Terms

**Accessible**

The degree to which persons with disabilities can access a service or program. Accessibility includes physical environment and communication mediums.

**Assistive Devices**

Assistive devices help a person with a disability to maximize their abilities. Examples include wheelchairs, computer interfaces, mouth-operated joysticks and many others.

**Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)**

A Government of Alberta program, AISH is for people who have a severe and permanent disability and are unable to work full time for at least minimum wage. AISH is not a needs-based program. It is a defined benefit program that provides the same maximum amount to each recipient.

**Assured Support (Supports for Independence)**

Assured Support is a needs-based program within SFI for people who are permanently unable to work because of a mild or moderate disability combined with other factors that make it impossible for them to find or keep work. Unlike the AISH program, Assured Support is not a fixed benefit. Different people receive different amounts, depending on individual circumstances. Assured Support is a Government of Alberta program.

**Barriers**

Barriers are obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from having equal access to opportunities, services and/or programs. Some of the barriers include urban vs. rural availability, communication availability, portability of services between regions, diagnosis-specific transportation, physical environment and staff sensitivity/education.

**Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD)**

CPPD is a federal government benefit provided to people who have a severe and prolonged mental or physical disability. The amount of the benefit depends on the amount the individual has contributed during his or her employment history. To be eligible, an individual must have worked and contributed to CPP for a minimum number of years and be between the ages of 18 and 65.

**Disability**

The World Health Organization defines disability as a reduction or loss of functional capacity or activity resulting from an impairment.

**Financial/income support**

Financial supports or income supports are provided to persons with a disability who, either temporarily or on a long-term basis, are incapable of performing sufficient work to generate enough income for basic support. They include Assured Income for Severely Handicapped (AISH), Supports for Independence (SFI), Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD), Workers Compensation and Employment Insurance.

**Job Coach**

A job coach is an individual who trains and supports workers with disabilities in an integrated work environment. The coach helps to motivate and direct positive action and results from both the individual with a disability and the employer.

**Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are individuals or organizations that have a substantial interest and involvement with the matters under discussion. Stakeholders involved with the Minister's Employability Council include persons with disabilities, Aboriginal and Métis people, families, employers, service providers, Alberta Human

Resources and Employment, Alberta Learning, Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Transportation and other departments, Workers Compensation Board, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, disability organizations, service clubs and educational organizations.

**Supports for Independence (SFI)**

Supports for Independence (SFI) provides financial and employment assistance for individuals and families who cannot meet their monthly needs. Individuals and families must meet a number of income, asset and needs criteria and must have exhausted all alternative means of support.

**Systemic Barriers**

Systemic barriers are discriminatory practices that are inherent within an entire system. They may be direct or indirect.

**The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

The mission of the Premier's Council is to champion significant improvement in the lives of persons with disabilities. It does this by listening to the concerns of the disability community and communicating these concerns to members of government. It makes recommendations to government on policy development, issues relating to systemic change and encourages government to adopt legislation and provide programs that will benefit persons with disabilities and their families.

**Workers' Compensation Board—Alberta (WCB)**

The Workers' Compensation Board is an employer-funded organization providing employers and workers with efficient and affordable disability and liability insurance.